

# Femmes d'Esprit

**Women of  
Strength,  
Heart, &  
Difference**

C. R. R.  
Architects

**CNR Honors Magazine  
Spring 2005 ~ Issue 3**

# EDITOR'S LETTER

Kathryn Tyranski

Another semester and it has certainly been a busy one, is going by rather quickly! It is hard to believe that it is already the end of March, which roared in like a lion. Hopefully April will arrive like a lamb and bring the showers that will grow May flowers.

It's been so white outside with all that snow throughout February and March. The weather has made many remain indoors to avoid the wind chill and icy sidewalks and roads. Nevertheless, many things have been happening on campus. The Honors Program has been very active and explorative in Manhattan. Honors has traveled to see the Central Park "Gates," visit the Onassis Center, and attend *Spamalot*.

The theme of this issue of *Femmes* is **Women of Strength, Heart, and Difference**. It takes a lot to be a successful woman in this day and age. She has to be strong both emotionally and physically. She has to have heart or the passion to move from event to event every day without giving up or giving in to what others may want. And she needs to be different—and we all know that every woman is unique and wonderful in her own ways.

The content of this issue is diverse, like women. There are commentaries on current Honors courses and trips as well as reflective essays on what it means to be a woman in this world.

I can't help but reflect on the recent STE production of Eve Ensler's *Necessary Targets* when thinking about the theme of this issue. In short, the play is about two American therapists who travel to Bosnia to counsel a group of five female Bosnian war refugees. I'd like to share with you some of

the words written in the program to the play:

"*Necessary Targets* was chosen as this semester's production because it addresses some of the issues that we see and don't see every day, from depression to eating disorders to the emotional and physical effects of war. *Necessary Targets* is a play that is meant to 'trigger, provoke, and release' emotions within the viewer to make him/her more aware of what war-torn refugees truly experience.

At times, *Necessary Targets* is easy to watch and sometimes it is not. Every time we sit down and see how the words on the page are transformed into life, we can't help but laugh...or cry. The refugees of the play—Jelena, Azra, Nuna, Zlata, and Seada—have survived rape, abuse, and loss and teach us what strength is really about."

Women are surviving around the world every day and making a difference every day and evolving every day. Don't forget about womanhood...remember that you are a woman of strength, heart, and difference. And...for the guys reading this magazine, don't forget you have those women in your life. Enjoy the pages of *Femmes*.

Sincerely,  
Kathryn M. Tyranski

Kathryn is a junior who has three majors—English, Communication Arts, and Women's Studies

Pole Leaner, might have been present, but generally only makes him/herself known on the subway, so I can't be sure). I felt okay about everybody flooding my neighborhood, preventing my usual Sunday breakfast with friends at the corner coffee shop (there was a line to get in the coffee shop...a line!)

"The Gates" pulled me in the same way that MTV did all those years ago. I had to keep going to the Park because I kept thinking I was missing something. It began on February 12 at a Gates party, high above Central Park South at a friend's apartment to watch the unfurling on the very first day. I think we all expected some magnificent flourish of saffron when, indeed, it took hours for the whole thing to be unveiled. We walked home from the party along Central Park South, weaving in and out of the park, touching the orange (my husband hates it, as does David Letterman, when anyone refers to the banners as "saffron") pieces of cloth as they waved gently in the breeze.

I returned in early evening a few days later, after Dr. Smart kindly dropped me off at the 72<sup>nd</sup> Street subway station, and opted to walk home along the Park to see "The Gates" in twilight.

Early morning, I urged my husband one day; we haven't seen it yet in early morning. Take a picture where that guy is, I pleaded, just in case his angle is better than ours. (This became a common practice at "The Gates," with people constantly running from one person's photo angle to another, in case they saw something better).



Photo: E. Klupt

From the roof, I demanded, we haven't seen it yet from our roof, so he patiently pushed "44" in the elevator when we live on "26."

My parents came, and it became a group experience. Then it snowed, and I returned to the Park once more. Weekend. Weekday. High noon. Sunrise. With a camera. For a jog. Power walking. Again and again, I visited "The Gates," each time different.

Does it define great art? Well, since Christo and Jeanne-Claude refuse to define it, I really don't feel a need to. But I do hope that the thousands upon thousands who flooded midtown will return now that "The Gates" are gone, although perhaps not all at once. If nothing else, it got us all out of our shelters in February, and forced people not to sit in Central Park, but explore it, moving from one saffron (sorry, orange) banner to the next, sharing opinions, and offering to take photos for one another. Hot dog vendors made out like bandits, and I, while probably not having as intense an artistic experience as some, got a lot of exercise and rediscovered – yet again – why I love not only Central Park, but New York.



## A CLOSER LOOK:

# AN AUTHENTIC WORM JOURNAL

Megan Skrip

Megan is a sophomore  
Biology major who  
also is a board member  
to CNR's W.I.L.D.E.

Before coming to CNR, I thought that earthworms in the Northeast had no downside. They had probably been here since the beginning of time, right? Before humans even got to this continent? I assumed that they were in the forest as well

as in the yard, but I never thought to check.

The common night crawler, experience with which peppered my childhood, actually evolved an ocean away.

This species was introduced to North America by colonial set-

tlers and, since then, has been somewhat absorbed into the northern forests it invaded. The most recent Ice Age eliminated the last native New York (and Massachusetts) earthworms thousands of years ago. Besides the night crawlers, more earthworm species, even more recently, have been brought to the U.S. through human trade and transportation—earthworms from Europe and Asia that are bigger, more rapid consumers, and steadily invading portions of the country. For forests that had evolved without earthworms, these decomposers, so helpful to the farmer, are dramatically altering the makeup of the forest floor and consequently influencing its inhabitants. Context, as I've come to learn, must be a prime consideration for understanding any species.

So began my Honors Contract delving

into the world of the exotic earthworm. Along with Shonda Gaylord, recipient of the Freshman Research Scholarship, and under the guidance of Dr. Faith Kostel-Hughes, I started to study the worms that are influencing the dynamics of an ecosystem that had never known them before. Marshlands Conservancy in Rye, N.Y., a wildlife sanctuary curated by Alison Bealle, is just one of the areas in which exotic earthworms have created noticeable changes in the soil. Here, our research began.

### 10 September 2004: Into the Forest

Shonda and I took our first guided tour through Marshlands Conservancy on a day not too long after a rainstorm. Here, Dr. K. and Alison revealed to us the dramatic soil alterations the worms had produced. Along the trail, patches of forest floor lay devoid of leaves, consisting of only a crumbly stratum of earthworm castings (nutrient-rich "worm poop"). With the leaves that usually cover the forest floor gone, castings loosen the soil, making it more vulnerable to erosion and causing the leaching of nutrients that normally would lay contained in the slowly decaying organic layer. Hiking along the woodchip trails, and scooping up the earthworms themselves as we spied them, Shonda and I witnessed the quite atypical behavior of these animals. I was adequately familiar with the behavior of the night crawler (which I would soon come to know as *Lumbricus terrestris*), a veritably docile kind of worm that tends to burrow deeply. These specimens, however, were stouter



Above: Members of last semester's Environmental Biology Class digging through the soil at Marshland's Conservancy for earthworms.

Photo: T. Nguyen

# A PROFESSOR'S PERSPECTIVE: ON GENDER, SEXUALITY, & IDENTITY

Dr. Roblyn Rawlins

We live in a sex-saturated society: sex sells, sex scandals, sexual politics, sex and the city. Sex permeates every aspect of our lives from advertising to television to politics to our relationships with our selves, our bodies, and with others – our friends, our peers, our families, our partners. Just a sampling of the past weeks' sex-related headlines: a Circuit Court declines to review an Alabama state law prohibiting the sale of sex toys; a research study indicates that young people are now less likely to adhere to safe-sex practices than they were before the introduction of new HIV drug therapies; a hacker gives tabloid readers access to the private messages of a celebrity whose fame grew in large part out of a sex scandal (yes, Paris Hilton); more reporters show up to cover the Michael Jackson sex crime trial than are covering American troops in Iraq.

Despite the ubiquity of sexual images in our culture, we rarely consider the social, historical, political, and cultural contexts of sexuality. Many people take the sexual attitudes and practices in our society for granted, assuming that they are the result of natural, biologically-based drives. But sexualities are more than just natural "urges" or drives: what we do sexually, and what we think about what we do sexually, are largely the product of our social context and our interactions with one another. Sexual attitudes and behavior vary considerably across social contexts and geographic and temporal space. Human sexuality is not instinctive but is learned from our families, our peers, sex education in school, popular culture, negotiations with partners, and listening to our own bodies. Much is learned from what is not said as

well as what is made explicit.

Despite the sex-saturation of our culture, there is still much that goes unsaid in regards to sexuality. Although today's youth can access the most graphic representations of sex merely by clicking a mouse, in schools they are actually learning less about sexuality than they were a few decades ago. Empirical research on sexuality has been hampered by a lack of research funding, by parents who refuse to grant consent for their under-eighteen children to participate in research studies, by governmental policies hostile to sexuality research, and by Americans' reluctance to answer survey questions about their sex lives. Nevertheless, there is good empirically-based information about sexual practices, attitudes, and sexual health, but this information is not widely disseminated. Many parents, politicians, and educators continue to labor under the mistaken assumption that access to information about sexuality encourages sexual activity.

In the Honors 108 seminar Topics in Identity: Gender and Sexuality, we talk about the social, psychological, ethical, political, and personal dimensions of gender and sexuality. Our discussions are primarily based upon social scientific studies. We are seeking answers to such questions as how has sexuality historically been practiced and politicized? How does gender influence the meanings of sexuality? How do we learn about sex and develop our own sexual identity? What does empirical research indicate about contemporary American's sexual ideas, values, and practices? How has sex been commodified in our culture and what are the

*Continued on Page 20*

*Dr. Rawlins is Director of the Women's Studies Program at the College as well as Chair of Sociology.*



*Above: Dr. Roblyn Rawlins.*

*Photo: S. Worthington*

# A DAY ON THE TOWN: CENTRAL PARK AND "THE GATES"

Christina Simpson

*Christina is a sophomore Communication Arts and English Major.*

"Mommy, Mommy are we there yet?" Sitting on his mother's shoulders, the pale small child bounced up and down. She pointed toward the brightness beyond the Park Ave. road that stretched out in front of us. Of course, there are always crowds in NYC. But this particular crowd has traveled even from the outer areas on New York. An hour before riding the subway, I heard the buzz amongst a couple of weary Connecticut friends on the Metro North Railroad. One boy around my age pointed to an article in a local magazine and told his friend, "This is what we're going to see."

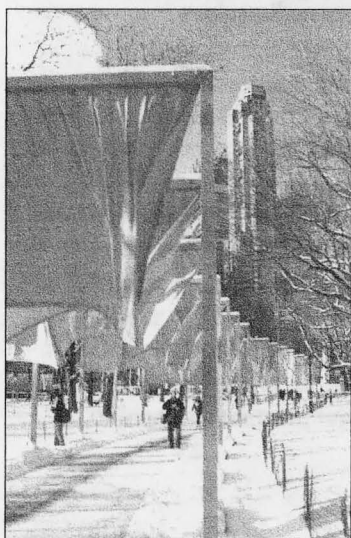
It truly wasn't a subtle sight. Christo and Jean Claude's most recent installation plots itself throughout the Central Park. The Gates is an art exhibition that string 7,500 banners made of saffron-colored nylon above the various pathways of the park. They were suspended high enough for a fingertip's touch. Walking under The Gates, I felt as though I should appreciate this more. I mean, I was literally walking through art. Central Park was Christo and Jean Claude's canvas, so despite my initial feelings, I was forcefully engaged in their exhibition. And

now I realized it was so bright and expansive and so visible, that at certain points the rest of the world, the microcosmic City of which I am referring to, either disappeared or became blatantly obvious. For example, there was a small

fork in my pathway. To the left was the wide mouth of a tunnel and to the right was another path marked with the saffron banners. The muddy waters reflected a softer orange tint and suddenly the gates were everywhere, even on the ground itself. And the police sirens on the outside of these soft walls grew louder and the people just grew too big: The German-speaking tourists, the tanned vendors selling celebrity drawings, the blonde-haired Hamptons crowd with their small digital cameras, taking pictures of their younger children who stood on the sturdy orange beams—the gates personified New York City; it was boisterous, booming, and everywhere all the time. You could not escape it. So, of course, I took the tunnel.

Even at the end of the tunnel I could still see The Gates. I walked slowly and took pictures of The Gates, which seemed even brighter from where I stood. When I finally surrendered to the art, I came out and noticed something different. I have been to Central Park before and it was always just a nice, pretty place to go. But, when I walked out of the tunnel, I noticed that next to me was this beautiful icy lake. A patch of ice melted on the surface, leaving enough room for the ducks to float around. The water was a deep sage that faded into a light teal color. The tree branches were so distinct, sharp like they were painted right into the sky. Two small, plump birds perched onto the branches. Either The Gates were revealing a side of Central Park I never really noticed, something that I had to find rather than what someone else sold to me, or it was hiding it with its own eccentricity.

*Continued on Page 19*



*Above: The Gates in Central Park.*

Photo: A. Bass



## LOOKING OUTWARD:

# IF ONLY

Renee D'Ambrosio

*If Only I could lose those last five pounds. If Only I could have straight silky hair. If Only I could have a flatter stomach, narrower hips, and a bigger chest. If Only I could be that girl. If Only I could have that guy. If Only I could have those shoes that match that bag. If Only I could learn how to love me for me. Me—the intelligent woman who goes to college and has a job. Me—the strong individual who strives for what she wants. Me—the admirable one who has goals, achievements, and dreams. Me—the most beautiful mind, body, and soul which makes me...well me. If Only I could realize what an amazing woman I am, then I could just be happy with me.*

Most women can relate to this. At one point in a woman's life, or all her life, she struggles to find herself and then tries to accept the outcome. She struggles to find her place in this world. It is not easy to do so in a society that shapes, defines, and controls women's desires. Sadly we tend to focus all of our energy on our body image rather than our strengths, our inner beings, and our accomplishments as women. We have come a long way. Let me briefly show you as I pull a clip of writing from *Appetites* by Caroline Knapp:

"Women certainly have more than they did a generation ago; we are far less formally constrained, far more autonomous, and far more politically powerful, at least potentially so. Forty-three million women—forty percent of all adult women live independently today, without traditional support. Women make the vast majority of consumer purchases in this country—eighty-three percent—and buy one fifth of all homes. We have an unprecedented amount of legal protection, with equality on the

basis of sex required by law in virtually every area of American life. We are better educated than the women of any preceding generation, with women representing more than half of full-time college enrollment. By all accounts, we ought to feel powerful, competent, and strong..."

With all of this said, can anyone tell me why we are so fixated on our appearance, so fixated on what society expects from us, and so fixated on pleasing everyone but the most important person in the world—you? A vast majority of women wake up every morning and feel an anxious and definite self-disgust. We linger in the mirror pointing at all of our imperfections. We feel repulsion at the feel of our bellies and hips as we zip up our jeans. We wish we had better lives. We wish when we should be embracing and appreciating what we have. I know I am guilty in falling into the realms of society's expectations. It is not totally our faults. As Rosalind Coward writes in *Female Desires*, "The female body is the place where this society writes its message."

This is true. However, we continue in our process to rise above a male dominating world. I can't help to ask "Are we there yet?" If only we can see our inner most strengths and powers, then we can continue to empower all women.

*Renee is a sophomore at CNR who is a commuter and member of the Greek Tragedy class this Spring.*

believe about “sorority chicks,” I have always placed my school work above all else. As a part of Hermandad de Sigma Iota Alpha Inc., one of my main goals is to be a leader: what kind of leader would I be if I ignore my studies?

In being part of a Greek lettered organization I have been greatly involved in a number of community service activities in which I have been able to put my leadership skills to work. As a leader I am able to share my Latino culture as well as other skills that have helped me succeed so far with the community at large. In taking certain leadership positions, such as Treasurer of my chapter, within the organization, I have been able to gain skills that will assist me in college, my graduate studies and, furthermore, life. I have refined my skills of working with others, patience, time management and organiza-

tion. I have put each of these skills to work in different aspects of my life already. I like to think that I have succeeded in showing the community at The College of New Rochelle what a “sorority chick” is really like. It is not all what you see on MTV’s “Sorority Life.”

Taking part in the Honors Program is a challenge in itself, and having the additional extra curricular responsibilities of being an active member of a sorority makes it a little harder, but still, I took to the challenge and never left my studies behind. I have always felt that this challenge has only made me stronger and allowed me to see exactly what I, or any college woman that sets her mind to it, is really capable of. It’s amazing how so many believe that these two worlds, Greek life and academics, are total opposites. The reality of the matter is that within Greek life we strive for academic excellence. I am glad that I was able to demonstrate what Hermandad de Sigma Iota Alpha, Inc. and the Greek community has to offer before I graduated. My hopes are that after I graduate there are many more sorority members within the Honors Program showing the array of roles that a woman is capable of taking on.



Above: Leslie and her sorority sister Cristina Zacarias (Class of 2005).

Photo: L. Gonzalez



## LOOKING INWARD:

# MYSELF & I

Christina Simpson

I gave her all I could that day to mollify the pain she felt this week. I helped her set the sheeriness of the curtains so the wind could blow them in toward us; they resembled her eyelashes when it happened and we watched with great pride. Her eyes were still glazed and her cheeks showed white traces of her pain. I just need it to bleed out, she told me. I just need it all out. I escorted her to the bathroom where I washed her face, and was careful not to touch the new wounds of her piercing located on her bottom lip. It was pulsing and almost obscene-looking and, although I was intrigued, I had to look away and smile oddly. She noticed this and smiled all the more and what a rare time to smile. What a rare time to use such an overrated expression of a shared moment. This was all we needed. Without permission, I fingered her bottom lip, pierced and purplish. I swear, it pulsed and she hesitated, stepping back. You'll get it infected like that, she told me.

When we returned to her room, she cried again and I touched her leg. And oh how her eyes were frightened, small, not as perfect and big as they were weeks ago. I wanted to wish it all away, this sad strange weekend. It hardly begun but she looked at me and said, "Tomorrow I will go to the park to cry alone." And I nodded in understanding, but it was a truly false response because she needed me there, she had to have needed me. She needed me behind her, even for a sour moment when she finally wept in public, for it is just as condemnable and shameful to cry in public than it is to have sex on the streets. No one can really feel things nowadays. No one can call out or cry or bare their blood on

the corner of 42<sup>nd</sup> without a sympathetic soul pitying you. They would always pity her in some ways, revere her and pity her at the same time. She was destined to be famous for falling and rising again. She would be powerful, letting her emotions stream up her sturdy frame until it gushed vehemently out, penetrating everything and everyone, including me. When she wrote his name down she kept repeating it as if all she could be was an echo to him. I said the name as well and we chanted together. Soon, her voice weakened and broke and she wept again, burning his name in a small coffee mug near the window. The fire fed upon his name, scorching the dried red wetness swirled about the small paper, etching out his presence. But he was never there. Never there to see her cry, as she cried now on my lap. What to do with her? No one teaches you to care for the slips, only to mind your own and be strong. You want to tend to her like a glass of spilled milk, a bright mistake, split apart and dripping. You want to say nothing and clean it all away and not speak of it again. What to do with this on my lap, spilling forth everything, dampening my cotton robe. I played with her curls, crowning her head so ironically. My fingers tangled themselves in the bush, pulling out shiny tendrils like finding gold. I perfected a perfection, improved upon it, left my mark in her hair and she said to me, whispered to me as a young girl should, "You are the only one who knows how to play with my hair so well."

I am him, I explained to her. Again, the beauty on her confused face. She nodded, not understanding what I meant. I am him; tell me what you would say to him. She

## MODEL U.N.

*Continued from Page 10*

miraculously animating every cell of the body of the former tired student with endless vividness.

The last night of the Model UN, therefore, was a huge projection of one such moment, extending to the late hours of the night, locked in the vibrations of the dancing bodies. After three days of work and efforts to create meaning from the data that was given to us, we were finally very close to the academic solutions we were searching and absolutely able to relax in the atmosphere of the party. All of a sudden, the formal suits were wrinkled, the ties thrown on the floor, the high heels forgotten. The cold air from the streets was coming into the hot room and creating a sense of eternity, as the wind was barely tangible, embracing everybody that was dancing near the windows. The lights mixed in the darkness and played on the faces of the crowd. The vibrations fused in a sense of total euphoria; a mess in which music and dance were everything. It seemed that each student was moving on the verge of exhaustion, but in this exhaustion was constituted the whole energy of the spirits. To me, personally, hours and minutes did not matter any more as long as I was living and breathing in the surroundings of all the contacts. I cannot even count the number of students I was introduced to. But the mood of the place was getting tenser and tenser, and then...it was over.

Student parties always end too fast. Anyway, the nights in Boston were the best time off from school I had ever taken. That is why I would encourage all students who missed the opportunity to come this year, to try the next one. Apart from the excellent academic experience that the Harvard simulation offers, the nights spent in the company of thousands of other students from all over the world (that's right!) are incomparable in their exuberance and emotions.

## "THE GATES"

*Continued from Page 11*

After a few minutes, I had to leave. Unless I was those plump little birds with an aerial view of the Park, I could never really appreciate the project when I am just too close to it. Then, as I left, I saw a barricaded section with a sign that said in bright white bold: "Merchandising". There were men in sweat jackets and baseball caps selling pictures of The Gates. A crowd grew around the area as people emptied their wallets for a snapshot of what was already surrounding them, if only for a moment anyway. I must admit I did take pictures myself so I could revisit The Gates as I saw them, an aesthetic interpretation of everything that distracts us from everything else.

## MYSELF & I

*Continued from Page 17*

our day and it will continue to stay that way. She will take him back and he will try as hard as he can to please her, or let her down once again. It will go on this way until she is broken and coming back to me, to this place that really does not exist. And we'll cry and kiss like children. We will be children again. What is the weakness in that? Where is the weakness in learning colors and painting emotions? Hard all the time, can she let a little go without having to be held?

## GENDER, SEXUALITY, & IDENTITY

*Continued from Page 9*

implications of the commodification of sex for us and for the culture? What's desire all about? And finally, is an ethics of sexuality possible and what would it look like?

Sexualities are personal, social and political. Our sexual identities, our experiences with and ideas about sexuality are deeply personal. For some of us, this means that we personally wish to keep our sexuality a private matter; for others, this means that we want to shout our sexuality from the rooftops. Desire, fantasy, and what one finds erotic vary tremendously from person to person. We all have personal ethics of sexuality – even if we do not always articulate these to ourselves or to others -- and make our own personal choices about how we want to incorporate sexuality into our lives.

But what we experience as our personal sexuality is formed within a specific social context. What “counts” as a sex act, what is considered erotic, how often we have sex, at what age we begin having sex, with whom we have sex, what we do when we have sex, our reasons for having or not having sex, are all influenced by the social context in which we live our lives. The intersections of such social factors as gender, ethnic or religious culture, age, ethnicity, etc., influence our sexual behavior, attitudes, and ideas. For example, Michael Kimmel and Rebecca Plante present evidence that men's and women's sexual fantasies are highly gendered, with women's sexual fantasies tending to incorporate many more elements of romance, plot, and sensuality in comparison to men's fantasies which tend to mere graphic descriptions of sex acts and partners. This reflects the

extent to which dominant cultural constructions of gendered sexuality – specifically, the sexual double standard -- affects men's and women's personal ideas about sexuality.

Gender and sexuality are socially constructed. Society elaborates upon differently sexed bodies to construct genders and sexualities. Gender refers to the social meaning attached to biological sex, to masculinities and femininities, the social expectations of girls and boys, men and women. Ideas about the fundamental nature, desired characteristics, and socially approved roles of men and women vary across cultural groups and across time. So too, the range of sexual variations in our own society and the even greater variation across cultures and histories shows that sexuality is socially constructed. Gender and sexuality intersect to give rise to widely held cultural assumptions about what are seen as fundamentally, naturally different male and female sexualities. While men's and women's sexualities do differ -- and some of this difference is biologically based upon having a male or female body -- most of the difference, just as in the case of gender difference, is not naturally given but rather socially constructed.

In any given social and cultural context, at any given moment in history, people become sexual beings in the same way they become gendered beings. From a very early age, through our interactions with each other and with the culture, we are begin to learn who we are and what we are expected to be. Throughout our childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, we create and recreate our gendered and sexual



## A CLOSER LOOK...

*Continued from Page 7*

appeared to have larger hearts. This crude estimation of their physique convinced me, though, that they are of a more muscular breed than *L. terrestris*. Might this impact their success?

About a dozen feet away from our sampling site was a not-so-subtle depression on the ridge. I wondered how this bowl-shaped variation in the topography might influence earthworm distribution and the accumulation of leaf litter. When we examined the interior of the depression, a thicker leaf layer was clearly apparent. Would the amassing of litter in there be a smorgasbord for earthworms or dampen their effects? Worms were still found at the surface, but a greater abundance of other invertebrates like millipedes was observed as well. We even discovered a salamander, and were undeniably pleased. More leaf litter was found at differing stages of decomposition, and many acorns were uncovered. Different varieties of mushrooms appeared in the moist soil. This small microsite was truly intriguing to examine.

Findings from scientific journals have only reinforced my understanding of the phenomena I witnessed: by consuming and consequently reducing the leaf litter, exotic earthworms supposedly reduce soil fungal populations, foster the consumption of large seeds (like acorns) by making these foodstuffs



Above: This photo is a close-up of earthworms found at the Marshlands.

Photo: T. Nguyen

more visible, disrupt the habitat of leaf litter invertebrates, and have mixed effects on salamanders. In this area with increased litter accumulation and moisture (i.e., evidently lessened earthworm influence), we apparently found the reverse.

The earthworms we collected were later preserved in 95% ethyl alcohol—a drying agent—and Dr. K. then sent them for identification to Samuel James, an earthworm expert at the Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa. James later informed us on 18 October that the most prominent varieties in our samples were from Asia: *Amyntas agrestis* and *A. hilgendorfi*.

### 16 October 2004: Discovery and Complexity

A rainstorm was approaching on the day Dr. K., Shonda, and I next ventured to Marshlands Conservancy, but the excursion would prove quite eye-opening. We



Above: This photo shows bare castings on the forest floor, without a typical layer of leaves.

Photo: T. Nguyen

